

**NOTES ON THE DISTRIBUTION AND ADULT BEHAVIOUR  
OF *PRAETAXILA SEGECIA PUNCTARIA* (FRUHSTORFER)  
(LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE: RIODININAE)**

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**Abstract**

Early specimens of the Australian harlequin, *Praetaxila segecia punctaria* recorded from Coen almost certainly came from the nearby McIlwraith Range. Adults of this species inhabit closed rainforest and are crepuscular.

**Introduction**

The Australian harlequin, *Praetaxila segecia punctaria*, is a little known species recorded from Cape York to Coen (Common and Waterhouse, 1981). Nothing is known of the early stages and very little about the behaviour of the adults. During a recent field trip to the Coen district in January 1990 I found this species flying deep within rainforest on the McIlwraith Range, some 20 km north-east of Coen.

**Notes on distribution**

I collected a male *P. s. punctaria*, and sighted another, in dense rainforest (notophyll vine forest) along the old Leo Creek track, McIlwraith Range, at an altitude of around 300 m. The species has not been taken previously from the western side of the McIlwraith Range and has not been recorded from anywhere near Coen since 1905.

The 'Coen' distribution of this species is based upon two specimens (a male and a female) in the Museum of Victoria which are labelled "Coen, NQ, 29.10.05" [no collector given]. There is another male specimen in the Australian Museum labelled "Rocky R., Cape York, Qld., H.H., 29.10.05" and "G. Lyell Collection, Fig. 67 upperside in The Butterflies of Australia by Waterhouse and Lyell was taken from this specimen". Rocky River has its source in the McIlwraith Range and flows east a short distance to the sea. It is most likely that Rocky River is the origin of all three 1905 specimens.

Waterhouse and Lyell (1914), and subsequent authors, list Coen as the southern limit of distribution for this species, no doubt based upon the two "Coen" specimens. However, the identical dates of the "Coen" specimens and the "Rocky River" specimen strongly suggests that all three were collected together. Because the adults appear to be confined to closed rainforest with a deeply-shaded open interior, and because there is no habitat like this in the vicinity of Coen, it is almost certain that Rocky River is the true origin of all three specimens. The "Coen" labelling was most likely adopted because it was a convenient and distinct map locality; Rocky River is ignored by Waterhouse and

Lyell (1914) despite the fact that the specimen they illustrated was the one labelled Rocky River.

I consider it reasonable, therefore, to dismiss Coen as a locality for *P. s. punctaria* and regard the nearby southern end of the McIlwraith Range as the species' known southern limit of distribution.

#### **Notes on behaviour**

Adults of both sexes have been found settled amongst leaf litter during the day in deeply shaded rainforest (Common and Waterhouse, 1981; Moulds and d'Apice 1982) and when disturbed fly but soon alight again on the litter. The male I collected at the McIlwraith Range was found in a somewhat similar habitat but was netted at dusk. It was flying rapidly back and forth some 3 m above ground level in a small 'open' area amongst tree trunks deep within the forest. As it was nearly dark it was impossible to identify for certain what it was that was flying and to follow its flight path. After several random sweeps with a net in the flight area the specimen was eventually taken. It did not appear to have been disturbed by several near misses. Such behaviour suggests that the adults are crepuscular.

#### **Acknowledgement**

Mr K. Walker, Assistant Curator, Museum of Victoria, kindly extracted data from specimens in his care.

#### **References**

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